

The Brethren

GACarver, Jr.

13 July 1971

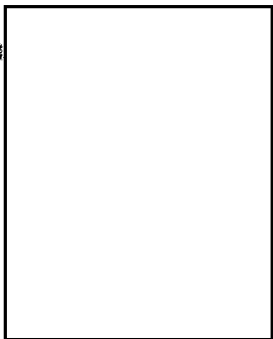
13 July 71

Attached is a memorandum that Mr. Sullivan distributed at the 13 July Vietnam Committee meeting. It was prepared in State and constitutes the Department's position on the PRG's 7 points. Sullivan claimed to consider it a better analysis than that published by the Agency in the CEB (and leaked to the Times by someone). I demurred on this point but did not enter into sharp debate at the meeting.

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Attachment
"The PRG Seven Points"

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THE PRG SEVEN POINTS

POINT ONE

Le Duc Tho, in his interview with Tony Lewis of the New York Times on July 6, made it clear that Point One covering withdrawal and prisoners is separable from the other six points, although he and other communist spokesmen have stated that resolution of Point One would presumably not be the end of the negotiating process. A PRG spokesman, in response to a question from the press, indicated that negotiations on the remaining points could proceed simultaneously with the withdrawal of forces under Point One. The evidence is fairly strong, however, that the other side would be prepared to reach agreement with the United States on Point One without regard to the other points.

The critical issue in Point One is the meaning of the term "withdrawal". The term first appears in the heading of the first point -- "Regarding the Deadline for the Total Withdrawal of US Forces". Point One then lists four things the United States must do: "put an end to its war of aggression"; "stop the policy of Vietnamization"; "withdraw from SVN all troops, military personnel, weapons and war materials of the US"; "dismantle all US

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bases". It is not clear, when the term "withdrawal" is used later on in the first point and by communist spokesmen, whether they include within the term all four of these requirements or only the third. This ambiguity may well be deliberate, with the full scope of the communist understanding of "withdrawal" to be clearly revealed to us only once we have "set the date".

Point One calls for setting a terminal date for withdrawal "in 1971" but there would appear to be flexibility on this point. Le Duc Tho said on July 6 that "in our view the proposed date in 1971 is a reasonable one" and the communists in the past have put much more emphasis on the principle of a deadline than on the specific date selected.

Questions that have come up in connection with Point One are whether the United States must take all its forces and supplies out by the withdrawal deadline, and whether we are obligated to remove also the American equipment belonging to the GVN armed forces. Le Duc Tho, acknowledging that for us to take our own equipment out as we leave would be expensive, asserted that the United States was rich enough to afford this and emphasized that "withdrawal of equipment should be carried out at the same time" as the troops leave. With regard to the second

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question, the PRG press spokesman on July 8 stated flatly that "the question of the armament of Saigon troops" is not included in Point One.

A central question is whether cessation of US military and economic aid to the GVN is encompassed within the "withdrawal" necessary to comply with Point One and obtain the return of our prisoners. If we assume that "withdrawal" includes "ending the war of aggression" and "stopping Vietnamization" such aid would presumably have to stop. If "withdrawal" is defined more narrowly the answer is less clear, but one might presume that aid could continue.

Communist spokesmen have shed little light on this point in public. Le Duc Tho responded to a query from Lewis on this point by noting only that Point Five, which covers South Viet-Nam's foreign policy in the wake of a political settlement, provides for acceptance of economic assistance. An important private clue to the position of the other side on this point is provided in a report by the French Consul General in Saigon on conversations between French Foreign Ministry official Froment-Meurice and Madame Binh and

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Xuan Thuy on June 18 and June 21 respectively.

According to this report both Binh and Thuy "asserted withdrawal would have to include not only the forces of the US and its allies but also economic and military assistance...Xuan Thuy elaborated this point by saying they were using withdrawal in a generic sense, meaning the total stoppage of assistance to the present Saigon regime by all nations on US side. Our bases would have to be dismantled, advisers would have to depart and all help and materiel support would have to stop. Froment-Meurice had asked specifically about economic assistance. Xuan Thuy said this could be discussed with some other administration than that of Nguyen Van Thieu."

The most logical conclusion would thus appear to be that the other side is calling for cessation of military and economic aid to the GVN as part of Point One.

Point One says that after the United States has set a terminal date for its withdrawal within 1971, the parties will "agree on the modalities" ensuring the safety of the withdrawing forces and release of prisoners. It provides that the prisoners will actually be released by the time our withdrawal is complete,

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thus removing one ambiguity in earlier Communist peace proposals.

This point provides, that as soon as agreement on withdrawal is achieved, a cease-fire between US and Communist forces will be put into effect. This means US advisers and combat support will no longer be available to the GVN forces, which will have to continue to fight against the Communists. US military personnel will have to be taken out of the fighting, whether they are serving in American units, advising the South Vietnamese, or conducting air operations.

The category of prisoners to be released in connection with our withdrawal has been expanded in the Seven Points. These refer to "the totality of military men of all the parties and of the civilians captured in the war." This suggests that some 9,000 North Vietnamese PWs, 30,000 VC PWs and 20,000 Communist "civilian" prisoners would have to be released by the GVN at a time when military operations between Communist and GVN forces were still continuing. Such an arrangement would be extremely unfavorable to the GVN. It would be most difficult if not impossible to obtain GVN agreement to it. It could prove a serious source of contention between ourselves and the GVN if it appeared that this was all that was holding up the release of our own men held prisoner.

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It appears from the Le Duc Tho July 6 interview that the cease-fire between American and communist forces would not affect US military operations in Laos and Cambodia. There is some ambiguity in Tho's statement that "there could be no American military activities based in other countries but affecting Viet-Nam" but he states elsewhere that Laos and Cambodia are separate problems and it seems unlikely that the North Vietnamese would assert that our bombing in the Laos Panhandle, for example, was an activity "affecting Viet-Nam".

A final question is whether the removal of Thieu is called for under Point One. As noted above, it appears likely that cessation of US military and economic aid would be required -- a step which we can assume would lead within a fairly short space of time to the downfall of the present government of Viet-Nam. Point One does not, however, specifically require replacement, or even "abandonment" of the Thieu regime. Le Duc Tho, in his July 6 interview, appeared to assume that the replacement of Thieu would accompany US withdrawal. Thus he said: "After the withdrawal of US forces and other foreign countries' forces then the PRG will continue the discussion on other problems with the Saigon administration - but a new one without Thieu." He also made it very clear that changing the Saigon government is within the power of the US and was a step that should be undertaken by the US in order to arrive

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at an overall settlement of the war. In sum, the textual evidence is not definitive on this point but suggests that the other side expects that US compliance with the demands of Point One will bring the downfall of the "ruling group headed by Thieu".

POINT TWO

Point Two, which concerns the question of political power in South Viet-Nam, follows very closely the formula developed in the Eight Points of September 17, 1970. The first step is for the US to "cease backing the bellicose group headed by Nguyen Van Thieu at present in office". While no other names are mentioned, it is clear that Thieu's "group" can be defined to include whoever the communists wish. The omission of specific reference to Ky and Khiem is pre-election propaganda of little political significance. The second step is formation "by various means" of an administration "favoring peace, independence, neutrality, and democracy." Here again, omission of the qualifying phrase "without Thieu, Ky, Khiem" is of no real significance as these men can clearly be rejected by the communists as not being in favor of peace, etc. The phrase "by various means" is

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new. It may well be designed as a signal to us that Thieu could be removed through this summer's election process, a possibility specifically referred to by Le Duc Tho but which the communists may have been reluctant to mention in an official document like the Seven Points as ascribing too much potential significance to elections held under US/GVN auspices.

The next step is negotiation between the PRG and the new Saigon administration to form a "three-segment government of national concord". The segments were described on July 1 by the PRG press spokesman as being: representatives of the PRG, representatives of the Saigon administration who favor peace, etc., and persons belonging to other political forces who fulfill the same criteria. This is identical with the formula in the Eight Points, except for changing the name of the government to avoid use of the term "coalition" and dropping the description of it as "provisional". Nevertheless, as in the Eight Points it is to rule only until peace is restored and elections held. Unlike the Eight Points, there is no provision that the government emerging from the elections will be a coalition. This is of no major significance, as the Communists can make sure that any elections run by the Government of National Concord produce the results they desire.

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A cease-fire between the communist forces and those of Saigon will be effected once the Government of National Concord is formed. This represents a slight postponement of cease-fire from the previous PRG position, which called for it to go into effect when the two parties "agree on the formation of" a provisional coalition government. This is a small change and interesting only as another indication that the other side views cease-fire as something to be put into effect only after its basic demands have been met.

POINT THREE

Point Three deals with the question of Vietnamese armed forces. It reflects the phraseology in the similar paragraph in the PRG Eight Points and Ten Points, to the effect that "the Vietnamese parties will together settle the question". It does, however, add the point that this matter will be settled "in accordance with post-war situation", thus making it clear that there will be no discussion of North Vietnamese forces in the South until after formation of the communist-dominated Government of National Concord and establishment of a cease-fire. It states

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that this matter will be settled "with a view to making lighter the people's contributions". This is most likely a veiled reference to an anticipated drastic reduction in the size of the South Vietnamese armed forces, as reduction of North Vietnamese armed forces would not lighten the South Vietnamese people's contributions to the same degree.

POINT FOUR

Point Four calls for step-by-step, peaceful reunification of Viet-Nam in terms virtually identical to those used in PRG formulations of 1969 and 1970. It does add that, pending reunification, the two zones will re-establish "free choice of residence" between them. While a praiseworthy principle, this could, of course, be used by Hanoi as justification for retention of its soldiers or prisoners in the South or even for sending down new cadre to live in South Viet-Nam. Point Four takes verbatim from the Ten Points a paragraph calling for both North and South Viet-Nam to refrain from joining military alliances or allowing foreign bases or troops on their soil.

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POINT FIVE

Point Five states that South Viet-Nam will follow a "foreign policy of peace and neutrality" and maintain good relations with all countries. Much of the language is taken from a similar paragraph in the Ten Points. It drops specific reference to Laos and Cambodia presumably included in the Ten Points to satisfy Sihanouk's desire that all countries pledge to respect Cambodia's "territorial integrity within her present borders". It adds references to South Viet-Nam's willingness to accept foreign cooperation in exploitation of its resources and to "participate in regional plans of economic cooperation". It accords the possibility of future friendly relations with the United States a separate paragraph instead of giving it only a phrase in a sentence covering relations with all countries.

POINT SIX

Point Six, a statement that the US "must bear full responsibility for the destruction it has caused to the Vietnamese people" in North and South

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Viet-Nam, is a verbatim repeat of a subparagraph of the last of the Ten Points.

POINT SEVEN

Point Seven states that "the parties will find agreement on the forms of respect and international guarantee of the accords that will be concluded". This the first such specific reference to international guarantees. The subject had been covered, though elliptically, in the Eight Points; they stated that "the parties will decide together measures aimed at ensuring the respect and the correct implementation of the provisions agreed upon". It is interesting that both the Eight and the Seven Points provide that the parties to the war, rather than any wider group must decide upon international guarantee arrangements. While this of course does not preclude an international conference along Geneva lines, it does indicate that the function of such a conference would be to ratify agreements reached in a more limited forum.

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